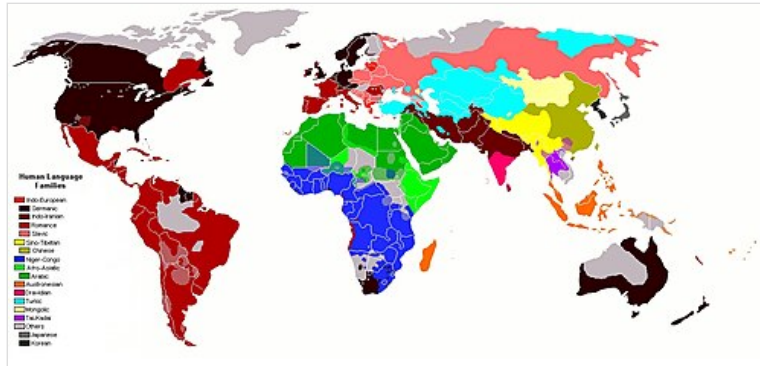


List of languages by total number of speakers



Current distribution of human language families

This is a **list of languages by total number of speakers**.

It is difficult to define what constitutes a language as opposed to a dialect. For example, while Arabic is sometimes considered a single language centred on Modern Standard Arabic, other authors consider its mutually unintelligible varieties separate languages.^[1] Similarly, Chinese is sometimes viewed as a single language because of a shared culture and common literary language, but sometimes considered multiple languages.^[2] Conversely, colloquial registers of Hindi and Urdu are almost completely mutually intelligible and are sometimes classified as one language, Hindustani. Rankings of languages should therefore be used with caution, as it is not possible to devise a coherent set of linguistic criteria for distinguishing languages in a dialect continuum.^[3]

There is no single criterion for how much knowledge is sufficient to be counted as a second-language (L2) speaker. For example, English has about 450 million native speakers but depending on the criterion chosen can be said to have as many as two billion speakers.^[4]

There are also difficulties in obtaining reliable counts of speakers, which vary over time because of population change and language shift. In some areas, there are no reliable census data, the data are not current, or the census may not record languages spoken or may record them ambiguously. Speaker populations may be exaggerated for political reasons, or speakers of minority languages may be underreported in favor of a national language.^[5]

Ethnologue (2025)

Ethnologue lists the following languages as having 50 million or more total speakers.^[6] This section does not include entries that *Ethnologue* identifies as macrolanguages encompassing several varieties, such as Arabic, Lahnda, Persian, Malay, Pashto, and Chinese.

Most spoken languages, *Ethnologue*, 2025^[6]

	Language	Family	Branch	Numbers of speakers (millions)		
				First-language (L1)	Second-language (L2)	Total (L1+L2)
1	<u>English</u> (excl. creole languages)	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Germanic</u>	390	1,138	1,528
2	<u>Mandarin Chinese</u> (incl. Standard Chinese but excl. other varieties)	<u>Sino-Tibetan</u>	<u>Sinitic</u>	990	194	1,184
3	<u>Hindi</u> (excl. Urdu)	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>	345	264	609
4	<u>Spanish</u> (excl. creole languages)	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Romance</u>	484	74	558
5	<u>Modern Standard Arabic</u> (excl. dialects)	<u>Afro-Asiatic</u>	<u>Semitic</u>	0 ^[a]	335	335
6	<u>French</u> (excl. creole languages)	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Romance</u>	74	238	312
7	<u>Bengali</u>	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>	242	43	284
8	<u>Portuguese</u> (excl. creole languages)	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Romance</u>	250	17	267
9	<u>Russian</u>	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Balto-Slavic</u>	145	108	253
10	<u>Indonesian</u>	<u>Austronesian</u>	<u>Malayo-Polynesian</u>	75	177	252
11	<u>Urdu</u> (excl. Hindi)	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>	78	168	246
12	<u>Standard German</u>	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Germanic</u>	76	58	134
13	<u>Japanese</u>	<u>Japonic</u>	—	124	2	126
14	<u>Nigerian Pidgin</u>	<u>English Creole</u>	<u>Krio</u>	5	116	121
15	<u>Egyptian Arabic</u> (excl. other Arabic dialects)	<u>Afro-Asiatic</u>	<u>Semitic</u>	84	35	119
16	<u>Marathi</u>	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>	83	16	99
17	<u>Vietnamese</u>	<u>Austroasiatic</u>	<u>Vietic</u>	86	11	97
18	<u>Telugu</u>	<u>Dravidian</u>	<u>South-Central</u>	83	13	96
19	<u>Hausa</u>	<u>Afro-Asiatic</u>	<u>Chadic</u>	58	36	94
20	<u>Turkish</u>	<u>Turkic</u>	<u>Oghuz</u>	85	6	91
21	<u>Western Punjabi</u> (excl. Eastern Punjabi)	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>	—	—	90
22	<u>Swahili</u>	<u>Niger–Congo</u>	<u>Bantu</u>	4	83	87
23	<u>Tagalog</u> ^[b]	<u>Austronesian</u>	<u>Malayo-Polynesian</u>	33	54	87
24	<u>Tamil</u>	<u>Dravidian</u>	<u>South</u>	79	8	86

	Language	Family	Branch	Numbers of speakers (millions)		
				First-language (L1)	Second-language (L2)	Total (L1+L2)
25	<u>Yue Chinese</u> (incl. <u>Cantonese</u>)	<u>Sino-Tibetan</u>	<u>Sinitic</u>	85	1	86
26	<u>Wu Chinese</u> (incl. <u>Shanghainese</u>)	<u>Sino-Tibetan</u>	<u>Sinitic</u>	83	<1	83
27	<u>Iranian Persian</u> (excl. <u>other Persian dialects</u>)	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Iranian</u>	65	17	83
28	<u>Korean</u>	<u>Koreanic</u>	—	81	<1	82
29	<u>Thai</u>	<u>Kra–Dai</u>	<u>Zhuang–Tai</u>	27	44	71
30	<u>Javanese</u>	<u>Austronesian</u>	<u>Malayo-Polynesian</u>	—	—	69
31	<u>Italian</u>	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Romance</u>	63	3	66
32	<u>Gujarati</u>	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>	58	5	62
33	<u>Levantine Arabic</u> (excl. <u>other Arabic dialects</u>)	<u>Afro-Asiatic</u>	<u>Semitic</u>	58	3	60
34	<u>Amharic</u>	<u>Afro-Asiatic</u>	<u>Semitic</u>	35	25	60
35	<u>Kannada</u>	<u>Dravidian</u>	<u>South</u>	44	15	59
36	<u>Bhojpuri</u>	<u>Indo-European</u>	<u>Indo-Aryan</u>	53	<1	53
37	<u>Sudanese Arabic</u> (excl. <u>other Arabic dialects</u>)	<u>Afro-Asiatic</u>	<u>Semitic</u>	41	11	52

The World Factbook (2022)

The World Factbook, produced by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), estimates the ten most spoken languages (L1 + L2) in 2022 as follows:^[8]

Most spoken languages, CIA, 2022^[8]

	Language	Percentage of world population (2022)
1	<u>English</u>	18.8%
2	<u>Mandarin Chinese</u>	13.8%
3	<u>Hindi</u>	7.5%
4	<u>Spanish</u>	6.9%
5	<u>French</u>	3.4%
6	<u>Arabic</u>	3.4%
7	<u>Bengali</u>	3.4%
8	<u>Russian</u>	3.2%
9	<u>Portuguese</u>	3.2%
10	<u>Urdu</u>	2.9%

See also

- [Lingua franca](#)
- [Lists of languages](#)
- [List of languages by number of native speakers](#)
- [List of sign languages by number of native signers](#)
- [List of countries by number of languages](#)
- [List of countries and territories by official language](#)
- [World language](#)
- [Languages used on the Internet](#)
- [Extinct language](#)
- [Official languages of the United Nations](#)
- [Geolinguistics](#)
- [Language geography](#)

Explanatory notes

- a. [Modern Standard Arabic](#) (MSA) is not an L1. Arabic speakers first learn their respective local dialect. MSA is acquired through formal education.^[7]
- b. [Tagalog](#) and [Filipino](#) are defined as two different languages in the ISO 639 standard. *Ethnologue* considers that Filipino is a standardized variety of the Tagalog language with no speakers.

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